# Tasman District Council

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SilverStripe

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Tasman District Council needed a new website to meet NZ Government Website Standards and Accessibility Guidelines. They selected SilverStripe to transform their site and provide an intuitive content management system that would allow them to keep innovating to provide their constituents greater value.

# Site purpose

Tasman District Council's previous site fell far short of the NZ Government Agency Website Standards and Recommendations (v2.0) and the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0. The old site offered little in the way of functionality, was difficult to navigate, and offered limited options to improve the maintenance process or deliver new developments due to the out-dated CMS.

The new website was designed to offer three key functions to users:

- **Transaction centre** – to allow users to do business with Council
- **Communication tool** – to provide easy-to-use access to information about Council's activities and allow users to engage with Council
- **Information gateway** – to provide online access to Council's data.

Following a comprehensive period of public consultation to establish exactly what all the stakeholders were looking for from the Council website, a new information hierarchy and navigation structure was developed for the site. Content was delivered by a team of editors and Contributors across all departments and levels within Council.

# What we did

SilverStripe worked with the Tasman District Council and other development partners in order to create a truly useful website.

The demographics and geography of the Tasman Region provided some additional challenges to the project. With many residents living in remote rural regions, far from Council offices and without the benefit of broadband, it was important to provide an online experience that was accessible to dial-up users and which would allow more customers to interact with Council without needing to visit the offices.

We used our expertise in different ways in order to deliver the three key functions of the website that the Tasman District Council needed.

## Transaction centre

SilverStripe provided seamless integration with payment process provider DPS in order to enable online rates payments.

## Communication tool

At the time the website was launched, Tasman District Council did not have a public GIS capability. The website strategy determined that spatial data would ultimately be delivered in the public GIS solution, but that website users would need to see the location of things via the website.

This was enabled by tagging pages with spatial coordinates which could be used to display the location in a Google Map within the page, and also be used to create a parent page for a series of content pages, with a single Google Map showing the location of all child pages. This is used extensively throughout the site for things such as the location of Council amenities (offices, parks, sportsgrounds, Resource Recovery Centres) as well as the location of Environmental Monitoring Sites (River Flow, Rainwater, Swimming Water Quality).

SilverStripe CMS users have access to a new tab under Content, called Geotag. This allows them to enter Latitude and Longitude values for the page.

This customised enhancement to the functionality offered by Silverstripe CMS has allowed Editors and Contributors to utilise interactive maps within their content without needing to request development support, meaning more content can be delivered for less development cost.

### Information gateway

The CMS part of the solution is so easy to use that even the most novice contributor can produce a map page linking down to several child pages with ease. These page types have a consistent look and feel across the entire site which maintains the professional appearance of the site.

We purpose-built an extension to SilverStripe CMS so that it can access SilentOne's document information in order to make documents available to CMS users to allow documents to be published to the website. This is the first time that SilverStripe CMS has been fully integrated with SilentOne.

The search capability of SilentOne has also been added to the Search functionality within SilverStripe CMS to allow website users to search documents available via the site, as well as content.

Search Results are split into Pages and Documents with users being able to just view the document search results if they want.

It allows documents to be made available to website users simply by adding the document into SilentOne – this means that administrative staff can publish Agendas, Reports and Minutes to the website without needing to use the CMS.

This feature is not only providing enormous benefit to staff and website users now, but its use can be further extended alongside the online payments feature to provide pay-to-view access to Electronic Property Files in the future.

## What users can do now

- In order to provide the most up-to-date information to users during periods of civil emergency, the site has been designed to be switched to an Alert Mode, which places the latest status from the Nelson Tasman Civil Defence RSS Feed into a red banner at the top of all pages on the website.
- The new site has a light-weight design which makes it accessible to dial-up users. The use of images has been restricted to ensure that page-load times are kept to a minimum.
- The site navigation hierarchy is customer-centric, meaning that external users are finding it much easier to locate the information or services they are after. Together with the vastly improved search capability the site covers all bases in terms of how users are able to access data to ensure if the information is on the site, they will find it.
- Content is tagged with spatial coordinates, to allow for Google Maps to be integrated into pages to provide an additional way of navigating. This is used extensively throughout the site for things such as the location of Council amenities (offices, parks, sports grounds, Resource Recovery Centres) as well as the location of Environmental Monitoring Sites (River Flow, Rainwater, Swimming Water Quality).

In addition to the above, the site provides the following functions:

### Transaction centre

- Online payments for rates and water
- Online submissions
- Online job applications
- Submit water meter readings (for Consent holders).

### Communication tool

- Customer-centric navigation structure
- Additional content requested by user community
- Standardised approach to content delivery
- Webcams at four locations across the District
- Alert mode integrated with Civil Defence, which can be activated by any Editor with internet access.

## Information gateway

- Access to council meeting document library (agendas, reports & minutes)
- Access to council forms in the document library
- Access to a wider range of documents in the document library, including Resource Management Plan Maps
- Access to environmental monitoring data
- Search cemetery records.

## Measures of success

- The costs of managing the new website are significantly lower than the costs of maintaining the old site.
- The project to deliver the new website has been hailed as a resounding success within Council. It brought together a large team of Editors and Contributors from all parts of the organisation and was able to shatter the traditional silo-based view of the organisation to deliver a truly customer-centric website. This represents a significant cultural shift for the organisation.
- Having a single source of truth for important council documents both internally and for external audiences is a massive shift for the organisation towards embracing electronic documents.
- Using SilverStripe/Silent One has allowed Council to make over 5800 documents available to website users since the website launched in August 2010. This includes Council Meeting documents for all Committees and Sub-committees going back to 2006.
- The project successfully delivered the new website on time and on budget and is considered to be one of the most successful cross-departmental projects in recent times at Council. The website has been universally welcomed by users with almost entirely positive feedback following the launch.
- The Tasman District Council's website has climbed from being ranked 71st out of 85 council websites in 2010 by ALGIM's web audit, to third in 2011.
- The Google Maps integration won Best New Feature at the ALGIM Web Awards in 2011.

## Next steps

Get in touch to find out how open source helps provide greater value to citizens.

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